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PRESIDENT'S FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY BOARD

September 25, 1973

Dear Bill:

The Board's Science Panel, chaired by Dr. William O. Baker, reviewed the status of the Community On-Line Intelligence System (COINS) during the morning of September 6, 1973. A copy of the agenda and list of attendees are attached.

The Board's interest in COINS dates back to its recommendation to President Johnson in 1965 for the development of a computerized, community-wide system of exchanging intelligence data. Early in his first Administration, President Nixon endorsed a sustained effort to achieve such a system and directed the Board to stimulate and monitor progress toward this end.

The Panel discussion reaffirmed that there has been commendable progress on the technological side, but established no corresponding development toward an agreed community concept to guide the technical capability. The result is that COINS has an ad hoc management structure, insufficient program visibility and support, and reluctant participation by some agencies whose self-defined needs are not met by COINS in its present form. Some unanswered questions are:

- Is there a need for a national intelligence data base which establishes responsibility for the maintenance of community files and which declares information held by the several intelligence agencies to be the shared property of all?
- Is COINS to serve intelligence analysts exclusively (for example, as a tool to manipulate raw data), or ought it also to include product consumers as participants?
- Should there be a single intelligence data-handling system, or are there legitimate requirements for a multiplicity of inter-intelligence community systems?

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As a result of its examination, the Panel believes that the current improvement trends should continue, but recommends that COINS be given immediate high-level attention in order to:

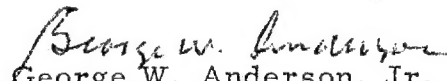
- delineate the specific objectives which a community system should achieve, i. e., a concept paper;
- develop an agreed community plan to implement these objectives;
- identify the management structure best suited to implement the plan, and manage the program on behalf of the entire Intelligence Community.

The formulation of an agreed community concept and an agreed plan of implementation are acknowledged to involve complex problems, notwithstanding the years of accumulated experience with COINS. However, in the absence of their being definitively articulated and accepted as authoritative doctrine, it is clear that COINS will not achieve the status of a community-wide data-sharing system. At best, it will remain but one of several independently pursued and very costly information-handling retrieval systems. Most importantly, the greater interest of intelligence consumers will not be served.

To accomplish the aforementioned recommendations will require both the unqualified cooperation of the principals involved and sufficient fiscal and personnel resources. Given the complexity and superimposing nature of the problem relative to the individual intelligence agencies, assistance from outside the government may be desirable. Without minimizing the crucial importance in this process of the Secretary of Defense and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, it is axiomatic that these tasks be performed under the direct guidance of the Director of Central Intelligence.

The Board would be pleased to nominate, for your consideration, individuals it believes qualified to spearhead the project definition phase, and of course extends its offer to assist you further in every way.

Sincerely,


George W. Anderson, Jr.
Admiral, USN (Ret.)
Chairman

The Hon. William E. Colby
Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D. C. 20505

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cc: Dr. Albert C. Hall, ASD(I)

Mr. Bernard Bridgewater, Associate Director, OMB

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